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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: Initial Phase of Voter Registration Faces Tenuous Security Situation

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: With the commencement of voter registration just one day away - Oct.6, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) is struggling to address a number of issues that illustrate the fragile and fluid security situation that could undermine the registration process in some areas. The IEC has recognized the need for a Command and Control Center to coordinate security support, promote quick response and provide broad situational awareness. The IEC is also exploring options for air transport of materials to some areas.

Attack on Truck Highlights Uncertain Security Environment

¶2. (SBU) At a September 28 security meeting, Dr. Daoud Ali Najafi, the IEC Chief Electoral Officer, reported a September 27 attack on a truck carrying voter registration materials. Najafi alleged "local Taliban" attacked the truck in Gul Sala, Chapa Dara district, Kunar province. It was traveling without an Afghan National Police (ANP) escort to Nuristan to deliver 25 registration material kits for 50,000 voters. The truck was detained and the materials burned. The truck and driver were not harmed and tribal elders reportedly negotiated their release.

¶3. (SBU) Specific details of this incident remain unconfirmed and some reports are contradictory - including whether or not an ANP escort was requested. Although this is the first attack on a truck delivering registration materials, drivers in a number of areas have previously refused to transport materials without an ANP escort out of concerns for themselves and their families. Many have reportedly received death threats.

Poor Coordination Hinders VR Process

¶4. (SBU) Faulty communication and coordination between IEC and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) also plague the process and undermine coordination on security issues. For example, representatives from MOD, NDS, and ISAF attended the Sept. 28 security meeting, but the MOI representative was notably absent. The IEC is operating in an accelerated mode due to the pressures of preparing for the Oct. 6 opening of the VR process, resulting in last minute or ill-prepared requests to the MOI. MOI also shares responsibility for the current

situation through its prior unresponsiveness to IEC requests and failure to demonstrate consistent commitment to coordination on VR preparations. Considerable efforts by the international community are ongoing to promote improved coordination, support capacity building and keep the process on track.

IEC Recognizes the Need for Command and Control Center

15. (SBU) A functioning IEC operations center staffed by experienced personnel might have staved off this particular security incident by coordinating security and logistical support for the registration process and serving as a central communications point, including a direct communication link with MOI. The international community (IC) has long stressed the importance of establishing such a Command and Control Center, but the IEC has not given this priority attention. The IEC also has a growing awareness of its own security vulnerabilities; credible threats have been made against the IEC compound and additional steps are underway by the IEC and IC stakeholders to address those threats and implement additional safeguards. The IEC now recognizes the importance of establishing a Command and Control Center. There is not yet a timeline for establishing this Control Center or a process for identifying trained staff, but swift implementation is key and the IC will support this effort as much as possible.

IEC Submits Last-Minute Requests for Air Transport

16. (SBU) Dr. Najafi predicts the security situation will worsen with the opening of the voter registration, especially in certain

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insecure provinces such as Ghazni, Wardak, Kunar, Logar, and Nuristan where Provincial Election and District Field Officers have resigned after receiving death threats from anti-government elements. The IEC is considering various options for the secure transport of registration materials - particularly the use of air assets.

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